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North Vietnam: The North Vietnamese deliberately took a back seat at the Indochinese summit conference of 23-24 April.

Although the conference was passed off as the handiwork of Cambodia's Sihanouk, who allegedly initiated it and who chaired the opening meeting, the get-together clearly was sponsored by Hanoi. The Chinese took no official part in the proceedings except to provide a site at some undisclosed location in South China. The only nod to the Chinese during the conference came in a brief reference to Peking's claim to Taiwan.

The conference followed the usual Communist line on all three parts of Indochina, but it noted its "special concern" for Cambodia. The joint communiqué condemned international efforts to "legitimize" the new Cambodian Government, such as Lon Nol's appeal to the UN and the Indonesian proposal for an Asian conference, and Sihanouk by inference denounced the French proposal on Indochina as well.

At this initial meeting the Communists were careful to work through "fronts" rather than governments, and they probably will continue to use this format in the future. The Viet Cong delegates came from their Liberation Front and their Alliance, rather than from the more authoritative Provisional Revolutionary Government, and the same nonparty coloration was provided the Hanoi delegates. With the exception of Premier Pham Van Dong, Hanoi's men were publicized as representatives of the Fatherland Front. The communiqué made much of the importance of the "national united front of each country"--an apparent attempt to build up Sihanouk's newly established front. It did not mention a formal organization such as an Indochina front, but it did call for further summit-level meetings.

The meeting apparently concerned itself mainly with propaganda and accomplished little of a concrete nature. More difficult organizational and political problems were held in abeyance.

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El Salvador: The government is pursuing a hard line toward Honduras and is severely hampering the operation of the Central American Common Market.

Because the government party won in the congressional and municipal elections last month, its need to use international tension for domestic political advantage has lessened. Nevertheless, the government's attitude remains uncompromising. Salvadoran officials, who earlier had favored creation of a demilitarized zone along the border, now are publicly criticizing the idea. In addition, military leaders have turned thumbs down on a key Honduran demand that National Guard troops be withdrawn from the frontier areas.

Salvadoran officials continue intransigent toward the Common Market. The government has deliberately disrupted traffic along the Pan American Highway by refusing to repair a key bridge destroyed on 27 March. If Salvadoran policy continues in this vein, economic relations with Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Guatemala will be threatened.

For its part, the Honduran Government has even less incentive to move rapidly to ease tension. President Lopez wants to play the threat from El Salvador in a high key because he needs justification for continuing in office past his constitutional term, which ends in 1971. Moreover, Honduras is placing great stress on demilitarizing the border, and is unwilling to discuss other matters until this issue is settled.

Both sides have agreed to talks in Washington in mid-May, to which high-ranking military leaders would be invited. If El Salvador is not more cooperative than in the past, little progress can be expected.

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Somalia: The military regime has rounded up and charged a number of civilians and army and police officers with plotting against the government. Reports vary on the numbers arrested, but some 20 or 30 civilians and six or eight army and police colonels reportedly have been jailed. Former police commander and incumbent vice president of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, General Korshel, has been designated the ringleader, and the conspirators have been accused of being in contact with a "foreign power." No other details are yet available.

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Rhodesia: A split in ZAPU, the only active Rhodesian insurgency group, deteriorated into violent clashes between rival factions in the Zambian capital of Lusaka last week. The leadership had a falling out about five weeks ago. Since then, the Zambian Government, which hosts the group, has been trying to get the two sides to reconcile their differences. The quarrel seems to have grown so bitter, however, that the two groups may now be irrevocably divided. Such a development would almost certainly lead to a further weakening of the nationalist insurgency effort.

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